Carnegie Corporation of New York Quarterly

"... 'Tis Time He Should Begin to Read"

"I HAVE always had a Fancy," wrote John Locke wistfully, "that learning might be made a Play and Recreation to children." He also wrote, perhaps in a sterner mood, "When he can talk, 'tis time he should begin to read."

The American educational system as a whole hardly goes along with that second proposition. Children, who usually speak by age two, are generally assumed to be ready to learn to read only when they reach the mental age of six, and even then they are tested for their "readiness." When they are believed to be ready, they are taught to read according to one or another or a combination of methods. Only the children are in a position to say whether their learning constitutes "a Play and Recreation."

Omar K. Moore is a Yale sociologist who holds vigorously to both of Locke's propositions and a number more. He summons the ghosts of Socrates and Whitehead and cites evidence accumulated by living psychologists to support his beliefs, which run roughly as follows.

Most parents and educators grossly underestimate the intellectual capabilities as well as interests of very young children. Specifically, normal children aged two to five can type, read, write, and take dictation. Furthermore, they can learn these skills in a way they enjoy; they have fun. Finally, they do not have to be "taught" them in a didactic way; they learn for themselves. The role of the adult is simply to provide an environment—what Moore calls a "responsive" environment—that permits children to improve the art of making "well-aimed conjectures" (see Socrates), which is probably how they learned to use their language in the first place.

So far, Moore has proved his points with 35 children, aged from two to five, in the New Haven area. Only two of the children are ranked as gifted; all the rest have I.Q.'s within the normal range. All of them have learned to typewrite, to read, and to write.

The basic instrument used is the electric typewriter (thus fulfilling the claim made in an 1882 typewriter advertisement that the machine could be used as an aid in learning to read, write, spell, and punctuate). Each child is allowed to play as he wishes with

the typewriter, which means, naturally, that he pounds the keys. An adult sitting next to each child simply repeats the names of the letters and numbers as he strikes willy-nilly. Quickly the child learns the connection between his striking of the keys and the teacher's response. Soon he also notices the different characters appearing on the sheet of paper. Eventually he tries to name the letter he is striking before his teacher can do so.

Another part of the equipment is a blackboard and chalk. After playing with the typewriter, the child is allowed to "draw" on the board. Before long he starts to print the letters as he has seen them typewritten, and he is started on his way to writing.

Once the child knows the letters, a simple projector is fastened to the typewriter, and the youngster reads and types out simple sentences. Finally he reaches the stage where he reads the projected sentences into a recording machine and types out stories from his own dictation, complete with punctuation—"pair-a-gwaph," "peer-ud," "pu-ren-the-sus."

So it can be done, as many parents as well as educators know: children can learn to read at early ages. In fact it is known that some extremely bright children actually learn to read "spontaneously," without the slightest help being given them. The question is, is it desirable? And what are the practical and theoretical implications and problems?

Consider the practical problems first, since they are the simplest, and since there *are* no practical implications if the problems cannot be solved. It is impossible to imagine the day when every two-year-old will be learning to read by this method unless the one-to-one student-teacher ratio which it requires can be overcome. Accordingly Moore, with the aid of a recent Carnegie grant, is cooperating with the Thomas A. Edison Laboratory in the construction of an automated device which will perform many of the teacher's functions. This device will be tried out with all the pre-first grade children at Hamden Hall, a coeducational day school near New Haven which runs from nursery school through 12th grade.

The success of the automated technique will be important for more than one reason. Not only are there simply not enough teachers to go around, but the machine, being a machine, is not subject to the natural impulses of teachers: to want to *teach*, and to be impatient. It is an important part of Moore's belief that the children should be given no formal training of the usual sort, and even that, so far as possible, the teacher should not show the slightest pleasure or displeasure with the child's progress. This is because of his conviction that the activity should be "autotelic": performed solely for its own sake and not for any extrinsic rewards or punishments. As far as patience goes, how would *you* like to repeat the word "asterisk" 75 times in succession while gazing at the slyly grinning face of a two-year-old who repeatedly strikes the symbol with obvious malice aforethought?

If the method works as well with automation as it has with live teachers (and this remains to be proved), and if the cost of producing the automated devices can ultimately be lowered (which presumably it can be with mass production), then we would be in a position to decide that all children should or should not learn to read at two or three. And in making that decision the real issues would be joined.

It has been known for years that children *can* learn to read early (many people in addition to Moore have proved this), but it is clear that most educators have thought it not desirable, and that their reluctance has not stemmed from the practical obstacles alone. Important questions of learning and of psychology and entire theories of pedagogy are involved.

Moore stands with those philosophers and psychologists who believe, in a nutshell, that a very powerful fundamental drive exists in addition to the ones we have all heard so much about (hunger, sex, thirst). This is the curiosity, or "competence," drive: if animals are comfortable and have free time, then

they will explore. These authorities think it stands to reason that the sooner the child is put in a position to fulfill this drive the greater, wider, and more lasting the effects will be on his total personality as well as his intellect. Moore believes he already has evidence, from the art work as well as social activities of the children he has taught, that the early grasp of reality they achieve through mastery of the symbols of the adult world leads to greater confidence and competence in all facets of their young lives.

The implications of all of this for the entire school curriculum are, of course, gigantic. (Moore himself does not believe that the technique should be used as a means toward shortening the number of years children spend in school, although that could of course be a result, but rather that the courses should simply be enriched: children could learn more about more things during their school years.) There are implications for methodology as well as curricula: adoption of this system would end the current debate about the various methods of teaching reading. And if, as many claim and much evidence supports, children's reading difficulties stem from poor or mediocre teachers, that problem too would be overcome.

Moore's theories and practices still have to stand the test of time and further experience. The children he has taught must be watched. (They now are tested periodically by a child psychologist, and as a safeguard their eyes are checked regularly, although there is no evidence that early reading has affected the vision of any of them except for the better.) Some believe that the children thus taught (or not taught) will forget what they have learned when they stop using Moore's method; others believe it will have undesirable psychological effects. The method must be tested, as it is now being tested at Hamden Hall.

But if, as Moore and many others believe, the theories are sound and the practical problems can be surmounted, we shall surely stand on the brink of a major educational breakthrough which will confirm what Whitehead said in another but similar context: "All I ask is that with this example staring us in the face we should cease talking nonsense about postponing the harder subjects."

READING

Printed words open a thousand worlds to us; they inform, inspire, and instruct; they tell us of the men who lived before us and give us the power to speak to the men who will live after us. The ability to read is so fundamental to civilization that it seems almost petty to refer to it as a mere "tool." Whatever it is, it is the most important subject to be learned by children.

There is neither the space nor the inclination here to explore what is in any event a fruitless question: whether children today read better or worse than children did 50 years ago. As with almost everything else in this imperfect world, the situation could and should be improved. The question is—or more precisely the questions are—how?

First there is the question of when children should begin to read. Then the question of how they should be taught. How should their teachers be taught? What can be done to improve the reading skills of adults? What do we know about the factors that underlie the ability to read and how they are brought into play? What research has been done on reading, and how are its findings translated into action?

Those are some of the questions that have been explored under Carnegie grants described in this issue of the Quarterly. These studies are merely representative of the kinds of work—and much more—that must be done as we try to help children and adults read with ever greater speed, understanding, and pleasure.

What Underlies Reading Ability?

YOU ARE probably reading these words with almost exactly the same degree of speed and comprehension as are quite a few other readers, but you may be using a different "working system" to do so: relying on different physiological and psychological skills, or different amounts of the same skills, to accomplish the same purpose. You may be strong on "word sense" and sight recognition of words; someone else may marshal his keen perception of verbal relations and just plain general information to help him read as well as you do. (Then of course there are the many who never achieve an effective working system, and hence are poor readers.) The factors that you rely on in reading now probably have changed in importance since you were a child: some of the abilities that helped you learn to read then have little to do

with your skill now; others little used then are of great importance now.

These are just a few of the points embraced in "The Substrata Factor Theory of Reading" of Jack A. Holmes, professor of educational psychology at the University of California. His theory, which he has developed over a number of years, is now being tested under a Carnegie grant.

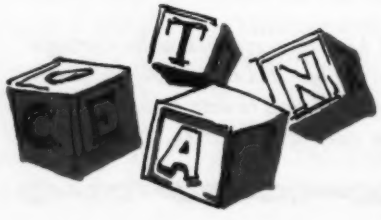
Holmes, who brings to his work a varied but valuable educational background in physiology, chemistry, and physics, has produced a 43-word definition of his theory which is likely to slow momentarily the rate of speed if not comprehension of the ordinary reader: "Reading is an audio-visual verbal-processing skill of symbolic reasoning, sustained by the interfacilitations of an intricate hierarchy of substrata factors that have been mobilized as a psychological working-system and pressed into service in accordance with the purposes of the reader." The professor is also, however, capable of saying with engaging simplicity: "Look, you can teach a kid to read by *any* method, every method."

His point is that the good reader, no matter how he was taught, has somehow learned to use a set of factors—abilities or skills—that work well for him. It is known that a number of skills contribute to the two goals we strive for in reading: speed, and what the reading experts call "power" but most of us call "comprehension." Sight recognition of words, Holmes believes, is the most important single factor. Intelligence, the perception of verbal relations ("hand is to arm as ——— is to leg"), the ability to discriminate between similar words, a knowledge of prefixes and suffixes—all of these are important (more important than phonetics, despite all the talk). But underlying these abilities are a host of other factors: some physiological (such as the way the eye moves across the page), some psychological (concentration span, for example), some educational (specific knowledge and general experience).

What Holmes is trying to do, with the aid of a skilled staff and a high-powered (and high-priced) computer, is to find out just what relevant weight each of the main factors has in relation to reading ability, and how the great array of sub-abilities contributes to each of them. In doing this he will be testing several theories about reading in addition to an important part of his own theory: that an orderly "gradient shift" takes place as we move from childhood to adulthood, and that we tend to make less and less use of certain skills that were important in childhood and to rely more heavily upon others.

As Children Change

The core of the research is an immense body of data gathered by the University of California's Institute of Child Development (now the Institute of Human Development) on some 200 Oakland school children during the 1930's. The information was collected, under the supervision of the Institute's late director, Harold E. Jones, as the children grew from age 11 to 17 and passed from the sixth through the twelfth grade. The data, considered to be some of the best of the type ever collected, include tests of intelligence, achievement, personality, results of medical examinations, psychophysiological and optometric information, and descriptions of the children's social and economic backgrounds. And fortunately, since Oakland is right next to Berkeley, a number of the "children" (they would be about 40 by now) are probably still available for further testing.



The practical implications of the research are quite apparent. The more we learn about what sets of abilities are the most efficient and effective in reading, the more we can concentrate on developing those abilities. It is already clear that in reading, as in so many other situations, we manage to rely heavily on our strengths and minimize our weaknesses. An analogy might be drawn between a reader and a tennis player who has a rather weak backhand. The player can get along quite well if he seldom allows his opponent to jockey him into a position where he cannot use his powerful forehand. But he would be a better player if he perfected his backhand too.

If Holmes proves, as he believes he will, that children in general progress from being overly dependent upon kinesthetic, physiological, and auditory factors in reading to a greater and greater dependency upon visual and cognitive factors, we may then be able to discover ways of helping the transition. Holmes himself does not take a doctrinaire position in the current controversy over methods of teaching. Since he believes word recognition is the most important factor, he naturally thinks that if the words can be learned directly, so much the better. But for those children who can't learn them that way, he is quick to urge instruction in phonetics or whatever else will help.

An interesting sidelight: although Holmes has isolated some 40 variables bearing on reading ability, his research so far indicates that home adjustment, study habits, personality type, health, and social adjustment have nothing to do with it. On the other hand, Holmes has some evidence to indicate that if reading success, or the lack of it, is related at all to personality, it is to the way one mobilizes his abilities to achieve the standards demanded by his own deep-seated value systems.

Tomorrow's Teachers of Reading

As IN all other subjects—perhaps more than in other subjects—the role of the teacher of reading is critically important. How teachers are taught to teach reading (sounds like "Peter Piper picked a peck . . .") is the subject of a new paper-back publication, *The Torch Lighters: Tomorrow's Teachers of Reading.*

The book reports a study, done under the direction of Mary C. Austin of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, of how the teachers colleges and other institutions which prepare 70 per cent of the nation's grade school teachers instruct prospective elementary teachers in the art of teaching reading. A grant from Carnegie Corporation supported the project. The report is available for one dollar from the Harvard University Press. This article covers a few of the findings, some of which are not surprising, others of which may be.

The first, which unfortunately is not astonishing, is that some 40 per cent of the college faculty interviewed are convinced that the academic quality of prospective elementary school teachers is lower than that of students preparing to teach in secondary schools, not to mention those majoring in other academic fields. Many other studies confirm this assessment. Two major reasons are cited. One is that virtually none of the departments of education screen candidates for admission to the elementary program; if the student has managed to survive the first two years of general education in the college, he (or probably she) is admitted to the major without regard either to her academic performance or to other qualities that might bear on what kind of teacher she would be. The other reason has to do with the curriculum itself. Geared as it is toward specialized ("how to teach") education rather than the liberal arts, many potentially gifted instructors simply won't enroll in such courses.

But the inferior talent of many prospective teachers is only the first of a series of problems. Most professors of reading complain that the curriculum allows them too little time to give proper instruction in the content and methodology of elementary school reading. Consequently much that is essential is either skipped entirely or barely touched on; one of the most important items thus slighted is the development of critical reading. This is a problem of grave concern to most college instructors, and it is compounded by two others: the students themselves are not able to read critically, let alone teach children how to develop these skills; and there is a dearth of material to make faculty instruction effective. Until these problems are remedied, mature readers will emerge from the elementary schools only in spite of, rather than because of, what they have been taught.

The one aspect of teaching reading which seems to preoccupy the general public (and the question will here be stated in the incorrect terms in which the general public seems to phrase it) is whether children should be taught to read by a "word-recognition" method or by phonics. It is not an "either-or" question. With few exceptions reading experts endorse a varied or eclectic approach to the teaching of word recognition, an approach which includes phonetic analysis along with several other methods. However, a trend in certain parts of the country toward using phonics workbooks apart from other reading materials is almost universally deplored by the faculty interviewed. The most any of them would say for the practice of teaching phonics *in isolation* is that it is of little importance; most said it is of no help whatsoever; and some said it is actually an impediment to the reading progress of many children.

An important part of the student's training is, or should be, practice teaching under the supervision of competent "master" teachers. Here too there are flaws. One is that a huge majority of the colleges offer practice teaching only during the student's last semester, by which time it is too late to correct whatever weaknesses may be revealed. And at that point, most supervisors usually lack the heart to

fail a student teacher, even if he is clearly not ready to teach. The classroom teacher under whom the student practices too often is not himself a good teacher, so that the student learns bad habits, and the teacher is not in a position either to instruct the student properly or to make a sound appraisal of his ability.

But all is not darkness, or won't be if the 22 recommendations submitted by the Harvard staff are acted upon. Most of them have to do with the instruction of prospective teachers, but several pertain to student selection and practice teaching, and the report emphasizes that if those two aspects are not improved, all other efforts to improve teacher education will be undermined.

Reading at an Adult Level

SOME YEARS ago, the literate portion of the nation received a rather unpleasant shock when authorities confided that more than half a million young American men were unacceptable to the Army during World War II because they could not meet fourth grade literacy standards. A statistic less well known, and perhaps more shocking, is that a study of adult reading based on 1940 and 1950 census records shows an *average* adult reading level of about ninth grade.

The problems of severely retarded readers have gained far more attention than those of the more general population. Facilities for improving adults' reading have been sparse, even in large cities. And although specialists in the field have agreed on the desperate need for such facilities, they have not agreed on answers to certain extremely important questions, such as the methods and materials which should be used (machines or no?), what qualifications the instructors should have (must they be reading clinicians?), and

the setting in which the services should be offered.

Taking the last question first, the Brooklyn Public Library and Brooklyn College acted on the logical assumption that a public library is a logical place to conduct a reading improvement program. In 1955 a Carnegie grant allowed them to undertake a five-year experimental program, in the course of which they not only improved the reading of more than a thousand Brooklyn adults but also shed some light on the other questions.

Since it was a pilot program, careful and extremely detailed records were maintained. All of the students received a number of different tests before and after their course. Groups were taught by different methods (some employing mechanical aids, others not), and the groups themselves were constituted differently—some homogeneously, some heterogeneously. All the students willingly provided information on their age, educational background, occupation, and so on. It turned out that most of them were professional and clerical workers of a higher than average educational and intellectual level.

Brooklyn College provided staff with backgrounds in clinical psychology and the language arts. Many library staff members were involved in the program, including, during the final phase, six librarians without specific training or experience in reading improvement.

The major findings (which are included in an unpublished, detailed report prepared by Max Siegel of Brooklyn College) are extremely heartening. The key word is "motivation." If adults who want to improve their reading meet together with other adults who want to do the same, under an instructor who wants to help them improve, they *do* improve. The only other factors which seem to have a bearing are intelligence and age; the higher the intelligence and the lower the age, the greater the gains in reading achievement. Factors which do *not* appear to have a bearing include the educational level of the student, his sex, the amount of time he has been away from formal schooling, whether he is taught in a homogeneous or heterogeneous group, whether or not mechanical aids are employed, how much training his instructor has had, or what his own personality adjustment is.

All the foregoing is not to suggest that there is little involved in conducting such a program—far from it. Max Siegel's report includes a number of recommendations directed at libraries which might wish to enter such an undertaking, one of the main ones being that they do so, if possible, in collaboration with a college or university. As he puts it: "In the war against not only ignorance but unhappiness, lack of self-regard, and not *being* anything or anyone, the librarian cannot work alone. He needs the help of other specialists. . . . It is the college or university which can provide these specialists in education, psychology, sociology, and anthropology . . ."

Library workers are warned to be aware of the bounds and limits of their competence and training. Although

personality adjustment does not appear to affect reading gains *per se*, plenty of adjustment problems do come up. One instructor said of a student: "He had a constant sad expression on his face, and in interview expressed the feeling that he was at the mercy of circumstances." Another student was disappointed because his instructor could not teach him to remember well. And one librarian wrote: "I proposed that anyone wishing to discuss an individual reading problem with me could do so after class. Invariably, these people wanted the help of a marriage counselor, psychiatrist, clergyman, or mother —not a reading counselor." Accordingly, librarians should be well enough informed to make appropriate referrals.

Students often suffer not only from not knowing *how* to read but *what* to read. Accordingly a good "reader's adviser" who can suggest appropriate and interesting books is an important member of a reading improvement staff.

The Brooklyn report includes a number of more technical points, such as recommendations with respect to class size, timing, and so on. And although it points out the problems to be encountered, the author does not doubt that they can be overcome, and closes with the following invitation: "The reading improvement task which continues to confront us is much too big for the specialists, or for any single professional group. Library workers: welcome to the fold!"

Research on Reading Research

IN EARLIER and simpler times all the American educational system was divided into three parts: the teacher, the community which hired him, and the children. The teacher and the community had fairly definite notions about what ought to be taught and how; the children, then as now, had little to say about either. As time wore on and education became a mass enterprise, other voices were heard. Teacher-training institutions sprang up; administrators were needed to supervise the larger schools and school systems; writers and publishers began to produce the books needed for millions of students. And at about the turn of the century the methods and authority of science were brought to bear on educational policy-making, teacher training, and the construction of educational materials.

This was true in reading as it was in other fields. In fact, research in the field has led to drastic changes in teaching methods and materials over the past 60 years. The course of these events has not run smoothly, and it is not running smoothly today. Many claim that schools, teachers, and materials lag far behind the best methods as disclosed by research. On the other hand, some claim that the research itself is based on inadequate evidence, and that it is therefore foolish to change doctrines and practices on the basis of it.

The whole problem is immensely complicated, and Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research, with the aid of a Carnegie grant, has launched an immensely complicated study of it. It is divided into five parts, the first of which centers on the reading researchers themselves.

It is exploring how reading researchers are trained and recruited, what leads them to choose certain problems and methods for research, to what extent they are guided by theory in formulating and interpreting their research, to what degree they are committed to certain programs or theories which might affect their functioning as scientists.

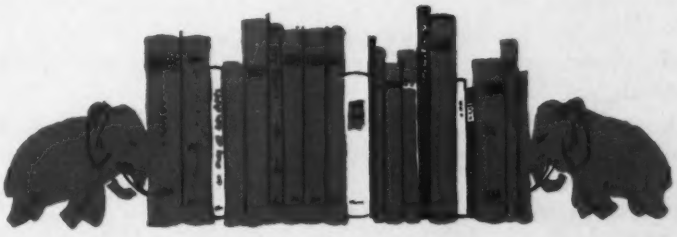
The second part deals with the writers of textbooks, and with textbook publishers. In other words, how do research findings trickle down?

Another "trickle down" question has to do with the attitudes, practices, and sources of influence on the local school personnel: the teachers, the administrators, and the school reading specialists, if schools have them. And how are their needs and problems communicated to researchers and textbook writers?

A fourth part of the study examines the flow of communications in the field through analysis of the published documents. It is concerned with how the research findings are handled in the literature, especially with how well the writers of general texts and articles communicate both the findings and the limitations of the research, and to what extent one finds "waves of opinion" based upon inadequate or overgeneralized research.

The final portion is a methodological analysis of reading research itself. Are classroom experiments properly controlled, and are experiments repeated under the same conditions so that generalized conclusions can be drawn reliably? Are limitations (with regard, for example, to particular methods, types of teachers and pupils, etc.) stated in giving conclusions and recommendations?

The entire study is vast, but when it is completed, in another couple of years, it should throw significant light not only on reading research but on educational research as such.



New Trustee

Fredrick M. Eaton of New York has been elected to the board of trustees of Carnegie Corporation. He is a partner in the law firm of Shearman & Sterling.

Born in Akron, Ohio, Mr. Eaton is a graduate of Harvard University and Harvard Law School.

In 1945 he was general counsel to the War Production Board and a member of the Combined Raw Materials Board and the Combined Production and Resources Board. At the request of President Eisenhower, Mr. Eaton served as chairman of the United States delegation to the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, which ended last July.

Mr. Eaton is a director of several companies, a trustee of the Presbyterian Hospital in the City of New York and the Corning Museum of Glass, and vice president and trustee of the American Museum of Natural History.

Staff News

John W. Gardner, president of Carnegie Corporation, is the author of *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* published by Harper and Brothers, New York, in February.

Two staff members have traveled to Africa recently in connection with Carnegie-supported projects. Alan Pifer, executive associate in the Commonwealth program, visited Nigeria early this year to talk with educational and government leaders about the development of education in Nigeria and the recommendations of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria. The Commission, appointed by the Nigerian minister of education and chaired by Sir Eric Ashby, presented its report on the eve of Nigeria's independence last October.

William W. Marvel, executive associate, joined other American, West African, and English representatives at a conference held at the University College of Ibadan, Nigeria, in late March, to consider questions for research on economic development in West Africa. The University College and the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations of the University of Chicago sponsored the meetings.

New Grants

Grants amounting to $2,765,300 were voted during the second quarter of the fiscal year 1960–61, which began October 1, 1960.

Included among the grants voted during the past quarter are those listed below:

American Council of Learned Societies, for administrative expenses, fellowships, and grants-in-aid, $650,000.

American Society of International Law, for support of its expanded program, $40,000.

Association of American Universities, for travel of representatives to university meetings in the United Kingdom, $24,000.

Brown University, for an experimental summer program for junior high school students, $40,000.

University of California, for research and training on social, economic, and political development of transitional societies, $200,000.

Center for Programed Instruction, for support of its experimental program and information services, $300,000.

Educational Testing Service, for research on the evaluation of self-teaching devices, $100,000.

Harvard University, for support of research by Henry Kissinger on political development in transitional societies, $45,000.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, toward a program of research and training on the politics of transitional societies, $475,000.

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Each issue of the Quarterly describes only a few of many Carnegie-supported projects in a variety of fields. Full listings of all the Corporation's activities are contained in its annual reports, which usually are published in January.

Carnegie Corporation of New York is a philanthropic foundation created by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. It has a basic endowment of $135 million and its present assets, reckoned at cost value, are approximately $214 million. Approximately 7 per cent of the income may be used in certain British Commonwealth areas; all other income must be spent in the United States.

The Corporation is primarily interested in higher education and in certain aspects of international affairs. Grants are made to colleges and universities, professional associations, and other educational organizations for specific programs. In higher education, these include basic research, studies of educational developments, training opportunities for teachers and administrators, and other educational projects of an experimental nature. In international affairs, the Corporation is concerned primarily with research and training programs which promise increased understanding of the problems the nation faces and which provide better selection and training of young men and women who must deal with these problems.

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